RUNE STRYDERS

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Conflict Resolution

Many actions require no special resolution—simply declaring the action is enough. If, however, an action leads to a conflict (as in combat), then you need to resolve the situation. Conflict resolutions are used to handle situations that can't be resolved through roleplaying or simple declaration of intent. Conflict represents the challenge, and resolution the way of overcoming that challenge. To put it simply, whenever there's doubt as to the success of a particular action, a conflict resolution must be made.

Prior to any situation involving multiple participants, Initiative should be checked, as explained above. Then each participant, in order, goes through the following process:

1. Determine Base Difficulty

All conflict resolutions in Rune Stryders start with a difficulty Number assigned to the situation at hand. In Combat situations, the difficulty is 10, and is opposed using the defender's Dodge skill. For other situations, an appropriate Barrier (if the target is another character) can be chosen, or a Difficulty based on the situation at hand can be applied.

Difficulty	Base Target Number for Success
Easy	5
Average	10
DIfficult	15
Challenging	20

Easy tasks are those at which just about anyone could succeed without trying hard at all, with limited repercussions if the attempt were to fail. *E.g.: Leaping from a second story window into a bale of hay, or tracking a heavily-loaded cart across a muddy field.*

Average tasks are the standard by which all others are measured, representing those things which can be overcome with relative ease, but which are not an automatic success. Failure to succeed at such a task often has negative consequences. *E.g. Leaping from a second story window onto hard ground, or tracking an opponent down a dirt road.*

Difficult tasks are, as the name suggests, more difficult and dangerous than Average tasks, implying that an average, half-hearted attempt will probably fail, and/or result in severe consequences if failure occurs. *E.g. Leaping from a second story window to land on a moving cart, or trying to track someone at night without the benefit of a lantern.*

Challenging tasks are most likely to require the assistance of more than one character, or additional time and effort, in order to overcome. Failing to succeed at a Challenging task often has dire consequences. *E.g. Leaping from a fourth story window across a moat of broken glass to land on a moving horse, or tracking a snake through an overgrown swamp in the middle of a rainstorm.*

2. Modify Difficulty

From the base difficulty number, you add or subtract the appropriate Attribute score plus any situational modifiers (penalties for weather conditions, etc.) A list of possible modifiers is provided later in this Book.

This final number, after modification, is called the *Target*.

3. Roll Dice

Once the Target is determined, roll zero or more 10-sided dice. If neither an Attribute nor a Skill is involved (as in the case of Barrier checks, described below) then dice are not involved at all. The comparison is between the Target and another number, success or failure based on that alone.

If an Attribute is involved, one ten-sided die is used. If a specific Skill is involved, then one or more additional dice are rolled, one per level of the character's skill, for a total of between two (level 1) and five (level 4) dice. Once the dice are rolled, the number of successes (results equal to or higher than the Target) is determined. If there is at least one success, then the attempt was at least partially successful. If there were no successes, the attempt was a total failure.

just by learning the proper pronunciation, true understanding of the Rune and its meaning in relation to specific situations is necessary to gain mastery of the art. Even the simplest peasant can manage to chant a blessing over his family at dinner, but handling more complex magic is best left to the masters.

The Runes go much, much deeper than mere language. They form the foundation for culture, society and, indeed, most of existence. Rhun is not only a word for language. It is also the name of the land, of the continent, and of the entire planet.

Rhun surrounds and supports and makes everything possible. Runes are a means to unlock the secrets of the Universe, stolen and secreted beneath the earth, later uncovered and unlocked by the Myndwar and their allies in ages past. These Runes were sound turned into matter, the literal act of creation inscribed into stones, later transferred onto the first Rune Stryders. Runes are the literal words of the gods, the syllables that created the Universe and will one day destroy it.

HOW RUNES WORK

Runes are cast by use of the Runelore skill, and in that respect they function just like any other skill, including combat. The basic procedure is as follows:

1. Determine Difficulty

The target for the caster's Runelore skill check depends on the target of the Rune. If the target is a living creature and unwilling target, the Runelore skill check is opposed—the defender rolls a Willpower check with a difficulty of 10. Otherwise, consult the table below.

Difficulty	Target
5	The Caster himself
10	Any object or willing creature

When inscribing or writing a Rune, the caster rolls a Runelore skill check to determine the number of successes. All Willpower checks by potential targets reduce the successes on this roll, even though they may not occur for days, weeks or months.

Casting at multiple targets does not increase the difficulty, but does require multiple successes.

A caster is only considered to have rolled a Critical Success if he rolls five successes and his opponent rolls none. Of course, it is much easier to roll a Critical Success when it is unopposed.

2. Modify the Difficulty

From the base difficulty number, you subtract the caster's Intellect score. Other modifiers may also apply *(see table below and the Book of War)*. This final number, after modification, is the **Target**.

Modifier	Cause
+2	per each additional known Rune in a Runix phrase (see Advanced Rune Usage)
+10	for the addition of any Rune (including a single Rune word) with which the Caster does not have skill

3. Roll Dice

Roll one die, plus one additional die per level of the character's Runelore skill, for a total of between two dice (level 1) and five dice (level 4). Determine the number of successes (results equal to or higher than the Target). If there is at least one success, then the attempt was at least partially successful. If there were no successes, the attempt was a total failure.

For example, Tawny wishes to cast a Rune on herself. Her base difficulty is 5, minus her Intellect (3), giving her a Target of 2. With a Runelore skill of 3, she rolls four dice; any results of 2 or higher are successes.
Tawny wants to cast a Rune at an opponent. She subtracts her Intellect and gets a difficulty of 7; rolling four dice, she needs at

least a 7 on one or more dice to succeed in casting the Rune. She also needs to get more successes on her Runelore skill check than her opponent gets on his Willpower skill check.

Control Runes

As noted earlier, simply speaking a Rune or scribing it is not enough to release the magical energy within a Rune. In addition to supplying the energy required to power a Rune, a caster must define the effects he wishes to create. Runic energy cannot be tapped without a control Rune. Control Runes shape and focus the power of a Rune, and release it in a useful form. Without a control Rune, a Rune will be nothing more than a syllable.

There are currently three known control Runes: *eq*, *ej*, and *ess*. One of these three must be added to a Rune to invoke its power. Each creates a different effect, and by changing the control Rune, a caster can create a variety of effects with the same Rune. Knowledge of a single control Rune can take years to learn, and only the most dedicated Runemages ever learn all three.

The *eq* control Rune translates roughly to attack. Runewords ending in *eq* are commonly used to damage an opponent. For example, *Ull-eq* can damage an opponent with a ball of flame.

The *ej* control Rune is used to defend. Finishing a Runeword with *ej* defends against the effect of the Rune. For example, *Ull-ej* protects its bearer against flame. It does not create a barrier of flame to protect the target, as commonly believed among the ignorant.

Finally, the *ess* control Rune allows a caster to use the effects of the Rune. Typically, a Runeword ending in *ess* will be easier to control and have more beneficial effects than either of the other control Runes. For example, *Ull-ess* will create a small fire, and can be used to cook a meal, light a torch or warm a hearth.

As noted in the Book of Roles *(Chapter 6)*, each level of Runelore allows a character to select one control Rune to add to their Runic vocabulary. A character with level 2 Runelore could have knowledge of two of the three Runes, but not be able to truly unlock the power of the Runes until he attained level 3.

Runic Attacks

Some Runic effects are simply damage-causing attacks. A bolt of flame, a spear of ice, or a blast of energy all reduce a target's Health or Body. In these cases, the opposed Runelore skill check is rolled as normal. The base damage caused is equal to the strength of the attack (as with a weapon's strength) added to the caster's Heart. The base damage is multiplied by the number of successes on the Runelore check (remembering to subtract the target's Willpower successes) and applied as incoming damage, as described in the Book of War.

In the case of written Runes, the caster adds his Heart to the strength of the Runic attack and notes the number of successes. Willpower checks against the Rune reduce the number of successes for that attack only if the target reenters the Runes range, or another target enters the area, the Willpower check must be rolled again to defeat the original successes of the caster.

Runes in Combat

After a brief reading of these rules, it should become obvious that Runes can grant enormous benefit in combat. The option to mix a devastating blow with a disabling Rune makes a knowledgeable fighter dangerous indeed. However, it should also be noted that releasing a Rune word takes more than mouthing the words. Energy must be summoned and controlled, and a character that releases a Rune can do nothing else for two actions while he concentrates on the release of magical power. This includes defending himself, which means that few warriors will take the time out to cast a Rune while in the middle of a duel.

Another consideration for casting Runes during combat is the possibility of interruption. If a character takes any direct damage at all during the first action of casting a Rune, the Rune fails. The interrupted character may act normally on the second action, assuming he has not suffered enough damage to merit a difficulty modifier.

Iron Wolf

Iron Wolves are thick, powerfully built Stryders, broad-shouldered and often riddled with spikes and plates beyond the point of utility. They are giant steel warriors, designed to cause and absorb tremendous damage. Generally having four limbs and no head, they are humanoid (and thus have two arms and two legs), though with a pronounced crouch that lowers their center of mass and provides additional stability. Many feature a single, solid compartment atop the shoulders for a pair of archers or spearmen. The Pilot generally rides inside the belly area.

Construction

Iron Wolves are roughly twenty-five feet tall, and extraordinarily powerful. They are constructed of stone slabs over a steel frame, making them incredibly solid but terribly slow.

Mission

Crews are typically large, numbering between five and fifteen individuals, plus the Pilot. This includes any assortment of heavily-armored individuals, typically armed with swords or axes designed to strike at the most determined foes. More lightly-armored crew members in shoulder-mounted compartments often carry spears or crossbows. Iron Wolves are used quite often by the Myndwar in the defense of narrow passes, though the Divaros are fond of them as well.

Assembly and Repair

Construction takes a crew of twenty people two full years, including torso, limbs, Rune scribing, and other modifications. Repairs cost 35 Vel per Health, 350 Vel per Body.

Armament and Armor

Iron Wolves generally rely on melee weapons to do their damage, typically carrying one in each hand, fixed by a crew and swappable between engagements. Weapons are typically large-bladed weapons such as swords or axes, though clubs and maces are not uncommon. It is rare to see an Iron Wolf sporting additional armor, though particularly damage-prone Stryders may sport one or two thick steel plates.
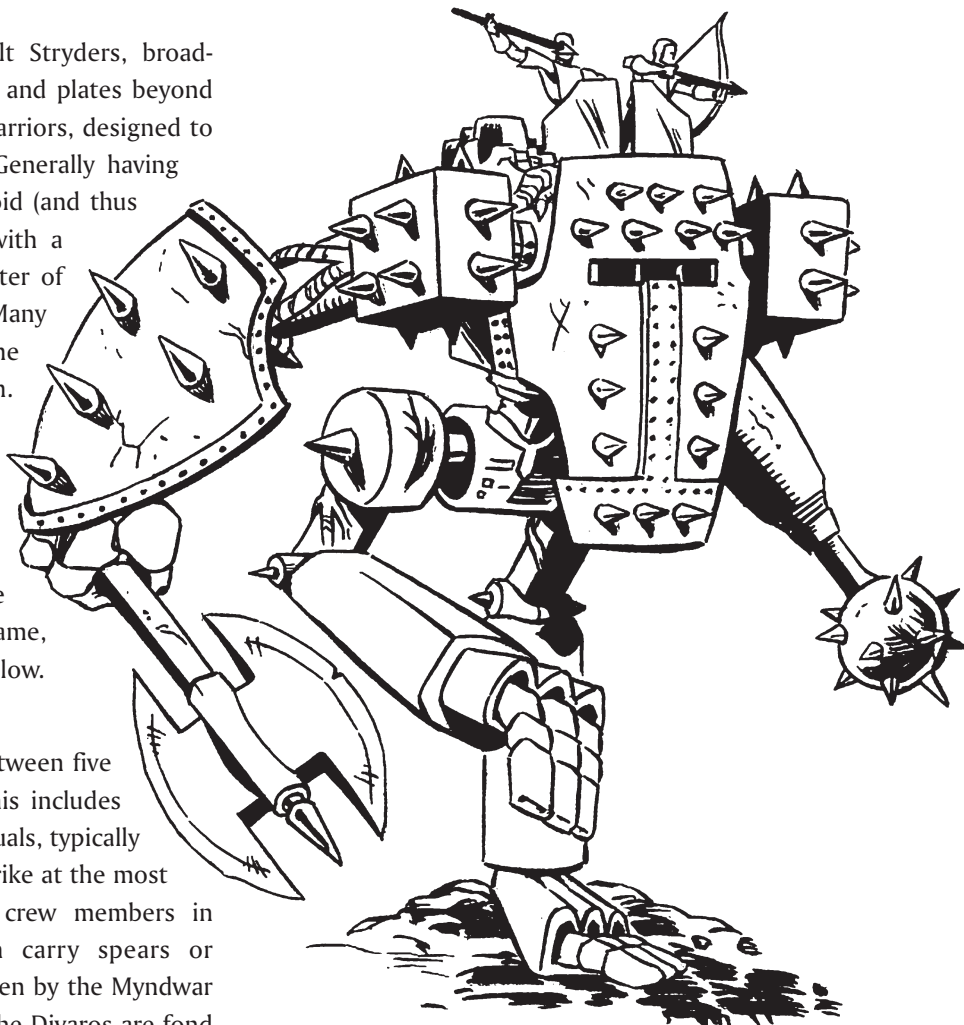
-2,250 TDR

The smaller races trick the giants by constructing a tribute: large statues arranged around a great stadium, where the lesser races propose to fight and die to amuse the giants. On the *Day of Reckoning,* the giant Deijin gather to watch the smaller races. The statues are unveiled to great fanfare. Suddenly, the smaller races clamber inside the heads and chests of the giant creations, and the statues come to life. Though highly primitive and capable of only limited maneuvers, they are the first true Rune Stryders, having been created in secret by the Divaros, piloted by the Zokili, and powered by the Myndwar Rhun. Although the Deijin win the battle, the smaller races learn from the experience and build better, faster Stryders. The tide gradually shifts in their favor. The Great War has begun.

-2,000 TDR

After nearly two-hundred amd fifty years of war, the lesser races defeat the last of the giants. From the skies above, they receive a terrible punishment. Nheta, furious that his own Rhun have been used to defeat his giant Deijin children, bakes the earth with heat, bringing forth a great famine and melting the glaciers. The heart of civilization is lost beneath the rising waters of what will become the Inner Sea, and the surviving members of the smaller races are scattered across the land. Knowledge of the Rhun are lost. The sun's fury lasts for only a few months, a single season, but the suffering that ensues lasts for two thousand years.

-175 TDR

The races crawl out of a second dark age. Knowledge of the Rhun (now called Runes) begins to resurface. National boundaries are laid. The Old Divarosh Calendar counts this as *year one*, based on the election of their first king, Pietr Jyoldenshire, a brutal warlord who unites the country with the promise of conquering the world and making the Divar the strongest people on earth. He keeps his word.

-150 TDR

The Divaros, ever expanding, wage war against the nation of Kator, wiping out most of its people. Under the leadership of the Druid Kantar, who claims to be descended from the god Lhei himself, the survivors retreat into the jungles to found a new civilization. In the Kantarin calendar, this is *year one*.

1 TDR

The Divaros and the Sivatagi struggle for power. The Sivatagi are defeated, driven across the mountains and into the desert wastelands. The Sivatagi count this as *year one* in their calendar. The Modern Divarosh calendar calls this *year one* based on the significance of the defeat. The Myndwar and Zokili also accept this year as *year one* as part of their agreement to form the Confederated Nations with Divar.

-100 TDR

After centuries of exploration, ten Runes are finally recovered in some form, including some of the ones that allow Stryders to be rebuilt and reactivated. Using this newfound strength, the Divaros drive the Draslander into the swamps. The Draslander people call this *year one*, and mark the occasion with tears.

-295 TDR

The Divaros fight the Myndwar, but are defeated when the Myndwar and Zokili join forces with the Kantarin to keep the Divaros in check. The Confederated Nations nearly fall apart. Many years of war follow. Detailed records from this era are mostly lost, due in part to historical cover-ups, and in part due to the burning and scouring of several prominent libraries and record halls.

335 TDR

The Divaros broker a peace deal with the Kantarin. The Zokili and Myndwar vote to include official homelands for Draslander and Sivatagi. The Divaros refuse. Several rebellious Divar countries break out of the union. Struggles for power remain as local politicians are killed and militias formed.

341 TDR

The present day. thirty-nine runes are known. Many maintain that there are many, many more to be discovered. Parts of the Divaros empire are in open rebellion. War looms on the horizon.